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Inner Speech and Agency*

There is a well known argument that thought is exercised through inner speech. In this paper I am adding the claim that action too is exercised through inner speech. We talk our thoughts, at least a lot of the time. But we also talk our goals, options, deliberations, plans and moves. We talk our way through our actions.

In one sense, it is the whole self which decides and acts. But in a more localized or pin-pointed sense, action is the work of the dialogical self conversing with itself in the arena of inner speech. Of course action is often also exercised or carried out through the body, as when we use our hands to dial a phone number or our legs to run. But inner speech is the controlling or directing factor in action.

Before getting to the main theme, I will sketch out, in part one, the inner speech theory I will be using. In part two I will show why inner speech seems to be a necessary condition for agency. In part three I will discuss the structure or stages of action and how inner speech is the control for each. In part four I will discuss two specialized problems of agency: how the mental practice or performance of an act can perfect the motoric or “doing” part of an act,

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and how inner speech has been used for treating psychopathologies. And in part five I will show how Durkheim's theory of ritual can be applied to the way we empower the self.

Part 1. The Pragmatist Theory of Inner Speech

Let me explain how I am using the term, "inner speech," also known as internal conversation, reflexivity, inner language, self talk, inner dialogue, etc. I use the pragmatists' version of this concept, i.e. that of William James, John Dewey and especially Charles Sanders Peirce and George Herbert Mead (Wiley, 2006a). The Russians, Vygotsky and Bakhtin, also have important versions of this concept (Vygotsky, 1987, Bakhtin, 1981), and their ideas can easily be integrated with those of the pragmatists (Wiley 2008). I will discuss the relation between the Russians and the pragmatists briefly at the end of this section.

For a long time in sociology Mead's I-me dialogue was the only recognized form of inner speech (Mead, 1913, 1934). But this formulation was considered imprecise, opaque, and not readily available for empirical research. It did not help that Mead stayed quite abstract, giving no illustrations of the internal conversation. And, except for his making broadly descriptive comments, such as how we "chide" and "plume" ourselves (Mead, 1913, p. 142), he gave no concrete examples. In effect, inner speech was not a usable idea in sociological research.

But when Colapietro wrote his pathbreaking book on Peirce's Approach to the Self (Colapietro, 1989), piecing together important ideas that were buried in Peirce's unpublished papers, Peirce's version of inner speech theory became,

for the first time, easily available. Colapietro's book also had the indirect but important effect of bringing Mead's dialogical self to life. With this new window into Peirce, it was possible to see that his version of inner speech theory differed from but could still be combined with that of Mead. And the combination yielded a synthesis that was far superior to the work of either thinker taken alone.

This synthesis combines Mead's I-me formulation with Peirce's, contrasting I-you (or I-thou) insight. For Mead, the internal dialogue is between the "I" or present self on the one hand and the "me" or past self on the other. The me has several other important meanings in Mead, but for present purposes, it can be defined as the past self. For Peirce, in contrast, the internal dialogue is the I or present self talking to the you or future self. Peirce defines the you as "that other self that is just coming into life in the flow of time" (5.421), and he refers to the I-you conversation as "tuism." (Fish, 1982, p. xxix; see also Ratcliffe 2007 for an interesting extension of tuism).

Note #1. I follow the convention of quoting Peirce with the notation "CP (x.xxx)" referring to volume and paragraph in the Collected Papers of Charles S. Peirce, (1936-1958).

When Mead and Peirce are combined, the dialogical self is the I talking directly to the you and indirectly or reflexively to the me. Of course this proposition entails two versions of reflexivity: the well-known backward one to the me and the novel forward one to the you. Still the internal conversation is an I-you-me loop, a triadic reflexivity, encompassing a more comprehensive version of reflexivity than either of the two dyads can do by themselves.

When I use the personal pronouns I, me and you, it may seem as though I am reifying abstractions. These three facets of the self are actually complex relationships and not, as may seem to be suggested by my usage, substances. My excuse is “ease of utterance.” If I say I, me and you, I can say a great deal in a few words, thereby saving tedious repetition. Given this disclaimer, I will continue with the present vocabulary, acknowledging that these are abbreviations for a more complex vocabulary.

To continue, the I-me loop is into the past. It is a 180 degree, semi-circular view, (to shift to a visual metaphor). The I-you loop is into the future. It is also a 180 degree view. But when you combine the two, as I think people actually do, both in their inner speech and in their thoughts, you have a 360 degree view, i.e. you can see your entire range of temporality. You can envision both the past and the future, along with the present, simultaneously. This omniscopic vision allows one to go back and forth from past to future and also to see them together. If you can simultaneously see your settled habit system (me) and your options for some new i.e. non-habitual action (you), you can more easily integrate the two practical resources, structure and agency.

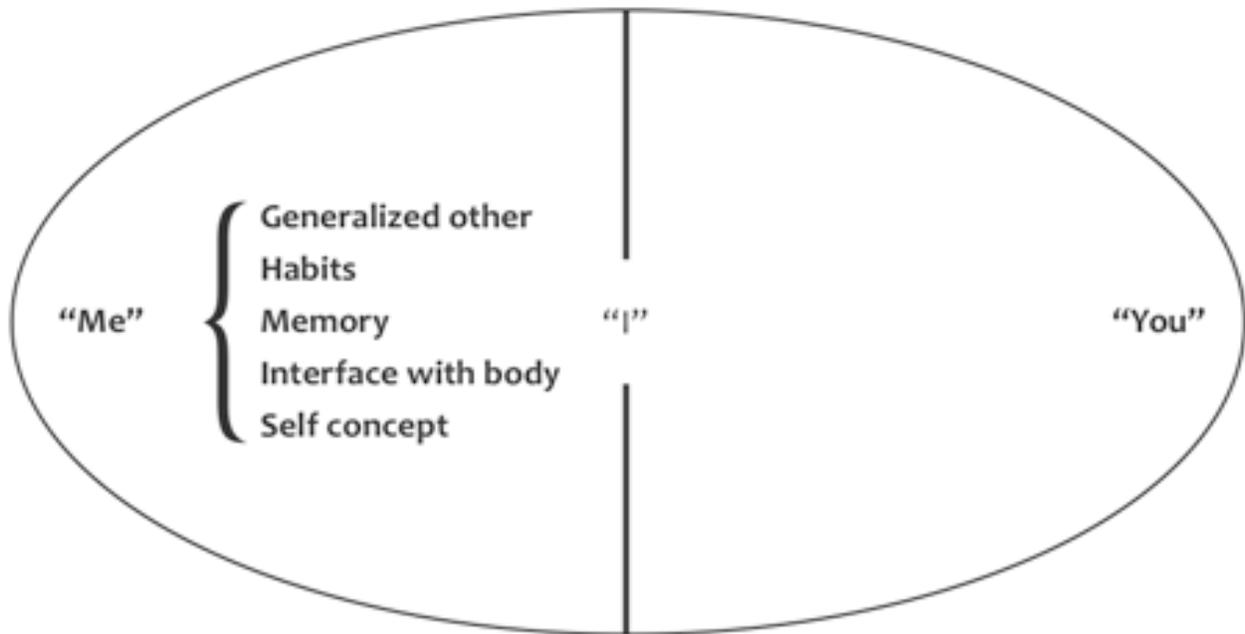


Figure-1 Peirce-Mead Dialogical Self

A diagram of the Peirce-Mead self is presented in figure one. The me, I and you are on the same line, the time line. I have listed five attributes of the me, approximately as Mead does. Peirce placed the "critical self" in the you, but Mead placed this faculty in the generalized other of the me, so I will follow Mead. The generalized other is Mead's catch-all category, for it includes all socio-cultural standards, i.e. moral, cognitive-logical and aesthetic (Dodds, 1997). The generalized other also implies a personalized sense of society and culture, for an "other" is a person. This suggests an affinity with Durkheim's collective consciousness. The habits are habits in the ordinary sense. Bourdieu's "habitus" is a more inclusive term, encompassing both ordinary habits and elements of the generalized other. Mead does not mention memory

as part of the me, but it is implied. Memory is simply all of our experience, and it trails off into the unconscious, both the Freudian and the cognitive studies varieties. The self does not include the body as such, but it does include a sense of, or interface with, the body. The traits of the body, including emotion, interpenetrate the self. Mead does not have a “self concept,” under that name, but, again, it is implied, and it seems to belong in the me. The self concept includes everything we think of ourselves. i.e. our self esteem and our traits. It is closely related, causally, to Cooley’s “looking glass self” (Wiley, forthcoming). The notion of “self feeling,” which James and Cooley thought was the defining feature of the self, could be understood as part of the self concept. Mead preferred the concept of reflexivity to self feeling, and he was cool towards this latter term, perhaps because he seems to have been threatened by and competitive with Cooley (Mead, 1930). So I will leave it out, although it could be a process leading into the self concept.

This illustration of the self is not meant to be a definitive portrait. Others might view the Mead or the Mead-Peirce self differently. And I might well change my view at some point. Still this picture seems reasonably usable to me at the present time, and I hope it provokes others to think further on this issue.

Another advantage of combining Peirce and Mead in this triadic way is that it gives a sharper picture of how humans engage with temporality. We are three legged stools, simultaneously in the past, present and future. From the point of view of natural science, we are in the present existentially and in the past and future only imaginatively. But physical science has a limited view of how humans inhabit time.

For the human, time is primarily “felt” rather than measured by the clock. In this sense -- that of psychology rather than physics -- we can be in the past and present existentially as well as imaginatively. The exact way in which we experience the three tenses depends on how we are at any given moment filling the three temporal orientations.

At an extreme we can include all of the future and all of the past into an all-encompassing present (Mead, 1932, pp. 23-24). But more often we have a present of some meaningful or workable “chunk” of time, William James’s saddleblock present, with futures and pasts that have the sizes we want them to have. The precise way in which we package the three facets of time depends on our purposes and in particular our projected and anticipated actions. The size of the felt present is in constant fluctuation.

In addition we are constantly in motion through time. The future of one instant is the present of the next -- and the past of the one after that. The self, moving down the time line, is in the constant process of emergence. Our bodies grow old but our selves are ever new. We are always moving through what William James called the “stream of consciousness,” although we are in a much larger swatch of that stream than he seems to have thought.

Another advantage of connecting Peirce with Mead is that we can now see both speaking poles of the conversation and how the dialogical self works. For Mead it was difficult to see the I-me dialogue. He gave no examples, particularly of the me talking to the I. His me was in the past and he confined the possibility of action to the present, so by his own theory only the I could talk.

But the possibility of the me responding was always implicit in Mead's notion of the specious present. If the felt present were enlarged enough to include the me, the me could talk. In physical time the me is in the past but in psychological time the me could be in the (now enlarged) present. The me could say "No we've tried that." "We need something new." Or even "That's sleazy, don't even think about it." Indeed the me, in its capacity as the generalized other, is constantly disagreeing with the I.

It was Peirce's inclusion of the you in the conversation which made it obvious that the I is not the only speaker. For the you talks in two senses. As I just mentioned concerning the me, the you can be in the felt present in such a way as it can stand on the speaker's platform and engage in speech. In addition, even in physical time, it is approaching the present, the status of I, and will soon be able to talk in that capacity. It was Peirce addition of "tuism" that disclosed the truly two-sided, dialogical character of inner speech. In fact, if all three facets of the self are together in the specious present, there is no reason why all three cannot take turns speaking, and for the dialogue to be between the me and you, as well as between the me and I (or the you and I).

This triadicity also makes the pragmatists more open to the Russians, Vygotsky and Bakhtin, who are much closer to the actual data of inner speech. The combining of Mead and Peirce facilitates the merger of them both with the somewhat different dyad of Vygotsky and Bakhtin. Mead and Peirce tend to be formal and proper, emphasizing the thinking and self-regulating functions of inner speech. Vygotsky is much more detailed in treating the semantics and syntax of inner speech. And Bakhtin, particularly in his discussions of Dostoyevsky's tortured characterization of Roskolnikov, shows the closeness of

inner speech to the life-defining existential emotions. A synthesis of the American and Russian approaches looks like a useful idea

If thought is largely in the form of talk, as I think it is, the I-you-me triad shows how the thought medium works. The triadic reflexivity can find and disclose more subtle connections within the self than a dyadic reflexivity can. The “you” gives you access to the future, to problems that are coming down the pike, and to opportunities for actions. The “me” gives you your memory, the insights and practices of the culture, the habits and trajectories of the past and the results of previous actions. The “you-me” arc is a pincers, which allows the “I” to grasp anything in one’s world. This linguistic device is your mind, surveilling the world, to cope with your problems and desires. Thoughts are abstractions designated by words, inner as well as outer. The key words are –in my opinion -- I, me and you, for they designate the structure of the self, which is a linguistic thinking “machine.” The combination of Mead and Peirce seems to shed new light on how thought and the mind works.

Another result of the Peirce-Mead combination is that it gives a richer view of the structure of the self. Mead, as well as many others, defined the self as self-awareness or reflexivity. This is an intuitively attractive definition, for it is self awareness that seems to differentiate the self from all other entities. Everything that the self does goes on in the arena of self awareness. But Mead’s self awareness was attributed to the I-me relationship, which ties it to the limitations of that dyad. If Peirce’s I-you is added to the definition of the self we have a much bigger and more complex structure of which we are aware. The definition of the self is enlarged to include more features of the self. Just as reflexivity goes from a 180 to a 360 scope, self awareness goes from a 180

to a 360. Awareness of the me is one thing, but awareness of the me and the you, including the relation between those two spheres, is considerably more. The Mead-Peirce combination gives you a more comprehensive definition of the self.

Also, the relation between Mead's I and me is between subject and object. But the relation between Peirce's I and you is between two subjects. The I is the subject now, and the you will be the subject when it travels down the time line and reaches the present. Still, even when the you is in the future, it is a subject in the grammatical sense (i.e. "you" is in the nominative case). And when we think of the you as in the specious or felt present the you is also a subject in a non-grammatical or ontological sense.

Being two subjects the I and you can enjoy the intimacy only available to two subjects. Peirce's "tuism" has two aspects: one's relationship to one's you and one's relationship to any other person, -- what I have called a "visitor" to one's inner speech -- construed as a you. Both tuisms have the immediacy of two subjects. According to Albert Schutz the self, being a subject, can have a closer relationship to another person than it can have to itself (Schutz, 1962, pp. 172-175) He valorized the relationship between two "I's. But this is only true if you define the self as an I-me relationship, which is what Schutz, following Mead, did. If instead you think in terms of Peirce's I-you relationship, which Schutz did not do, you have the same interpersonal intimacy within the I-you dyad of the self. When Husserl was giving an example of inner speech and said "you must stop this" or when Fodor said to himself "you can do it Jerry," they were talking as I to you or subject to subject, with all the intimacy that that relationship can carry.

The I-me-you triad, as a definition of self awareness, has two features that make it more powerful than the usual, I-me definition of the self. For one, the self is self aware of more features of itself, thereby making it a richer reflexive bundle. But in addition the self is also closer and more enmeshed, so to speak, with itself. I-me is formal and somewhat distant, but I-you is emotionally close and allows more intimate emotions in the intra-psychological sphere. Peirce's formula allows more easily of self acceptance and even self love, which is always an aspect of the self. In other words, Peirce's you is the "self" in a more intimate way than Mead's me is the self. Therefore the I-me-you circle allows of more internal closeness than was allowed in the I-me formula.

Another nuance of the I-you relationship is that, unlike the me, the you is in the second person. The you has considerably more "otherness" than the me, which, like the I, is in the first person. So one internal dyad, Mead's I-me, is confined to the grammatical first person. But the other internal dyad, Peirce's I-you, has a less confined grammatical niche. This grammatical location reflects the greater ontological sweep of the I-you relationship. The temporal zone between the I and me is inside the self, but the temporal zone between the I and you is, so to speak, outside the self. The past is in the self but the future is not. This is another sense in which the I-me-you self has more reality or "being" than Mead's I-me self has.

I think both Peirce and Mead sensed that they wanted to poise the human dialogue as extending in both temporal directions, past and future. Mead's me include aspects of Peirce's you, and Peirce's you includes features of Mead's me. But neither was sufficiently explicit about this. You have to bend their

concepts to bring this about. In the following text Mead shows he was trying to work in all three time periods -- past, present and future -- at once.

Now it is by these ideational processes that we get hold of the conditions of future conduct as these are found in the organized responses which we have formed, and so construct our paths in anticipation of that future. The individual who can thus get hold of them can further organize them through the selection of the stimulations which call them out and can thus build up his plan of action. (Mead, 1932, p. 192, cited in Joas, 1985, p. 192).

But Mead is stretching words to make his point. It is easier to say, with a Peirce-Mead synthesis, that the person is simultaneously working with the present, past, and future in an I-me-you, triadic vision.

Finally, the I-me-you relationship can be mapped onto concrete examples of inner speech. The idea that we speak directly to the you and indirectly to the me is a reasonable description of how we think and engage in self talk. Whatever we say to ourselves seems to be an attempt to interpret the past to the future.

2. The Link between Inner Speech and Agency

Turning to agency itself, this term is not standardized, and the various meanings that are used vary quite a bit. I will keep my definition simple, since I am primarily interested in the relation between agency and inner speech, not in all the intricacies of agency itself. Agency is the process of conscious and purposive human action, as opposed to automatic reaction. Habitual actions can be at the minimal pole of consciousness and purposivity, but even in these cases we often make a conscious decision to engage the habit. I will however emphasize the less habitual, more deliberate acts, for here is where inner speech has its strongest effects. This process of agency as I will look at it involves (1) the mental construction or modelling of a possible action, (2) the actual choosing of this or perhaps some other action from the options at hand, and (3) the behavioral carrying out of the action. So in agency we construct, choose and enact.

The kitchen sink is not draining properly, so I start mulling over the possible solutions. I consider trying to fix it myself, or asking my handy step-son to take a look at it, or phoning a plumber. I take a close, mental look at each of the three options. I then decide which path to take. I will ask my step-son, Dan. Then I phone him and ask if he has time to come over and look at the sink. At every step I am telling myself what to do and how to do it.

I need a new project so I consider writing a book on inner speech. I ask myself what it would look like, what issues I would consider, and how it would fit into social theory. I try summarizing some of the chapters. It seems to be a viable project, so I decide to start the actual research and writing. I begin churning out the chapters as conference papers and journal articles. The project is

moving along, so I get a publisher, turn on the steam and finish it. Again I have talked myself through it, from start to finish.

In other words agency goes on during a series of processes, all of which usually entail inner speech. Action is not a single burst of energy, but a build-up or construction that proceeds through a series of sequential dialogical stages. It is parallel to speech itself in that it has meaning, proceeds chronologically as narrative and obeys rules of practical syntax.

Agency seems to be located primarily in inner speech and not in some other part or process of the self. One argument for this is that you can observe the agentic process by paying attention to your inner speech. We can watch or rather listen to how the dialogical self create action. It does so in stages, not all at once, and this makes it easier to observe.

If you watch yourself making a minor decision, such as picking a movie or ordering at a restaurant, you can usually hear yourself discussing it with yourself. You may also be discussing it with others, but this does not disallow or supersede the discussion within yourself. The two discussions work together with the inner one providing interpretation and direction for the outer one.

If it is an easy decision you will just get the approval, so to speak, of the partner in your inner conversation. Usually this inner partner is Peirce's you. If the decision is a close one, say, between two good movies, you may stage a little debate with yourself. Is one of these movies leaving town soon? Which time of night is better? What am I in the mood for? And what does my wife want? This dialogue might be lengthy and systematic, short and perfunctory or

so fast that it is more unconscious than conscious. Still there is a conversation, and you can usually observe how the drift of the conversation leads to the choice.

In the case of more weighty decisions, such as buying a house or changing jobs, the inner conversation is longer and more complicated. And, as mentioned, it will be interspersed within, and even during, conversations with others concerning this decision. It will proceed over as many weeks as it takes to make the decision. If the external act has stages, say it begins with shopping around for options, you may search for a while and then retreat to inner speech and look at the big picture again, to see if you still want to go through with it. Do we really need a new house? There can be an indefinite number of false starts, retreats to thinking it all over again, and making still more starts. Yet, despite complexity, the process is there, you can easily observe it, and it seems to be the boss or master of the action. We assess, pick, and even sometimes re-make the act, and we do so by talking to ourselves about it.

At this point one cannot but remember the pragmatist idea that thought and inner speech are initially evoked by frustrations in one's flow of action. All four of the major pragmatists use this idea at times, but it is most explicit in Dewey (Dewey, 1910, pp. 11-12). You want something, you try to get it, your advance toward this goal is blocked by some circumstance, you pause and ask yourself what to do next, and you respond by describing the nature of the impasse and by searching for a way around it. Thought and inner dialogue can be a substitute for overt trial and error. The pragmatists were not always clear about whether the relation between frustration and inner dialogue was first encountered by the species (phylogenetic), by each individual early in life

(ontogenetic) or by people throughout their lives. They merely asserted a functional relation between frustrated goal-seeking and inner dialogue. Regardless of whether this actually explains the origin of internal dialogue, it clearly fits the idea that agency is directed by inner speech.

Of course this does not mean that all inner speech is based on frustrated activity. Some is purposeless day-dreaming or reverie. It can amuse one and thereby be an end in itself. Some inner speech is an end in other ways, such as exploring imagery or an idea. And some inner speech is so quiet, involuntary and dimly conscious, such as the kind we engage in as we approach falling asleep, that the category of purpose does not apply at all. My point is rather that inner speech is often closely related to frustrations, even though many varieties are not.

There are also many cases of frustration and agency that are emotional rather than instrumental. We are sad and depressed but we are not sure why. It may be because of problems in our love life. We talk to ourselves about this sadness, trying to find the social cause, assuming there is one. A major component of this self talk will be the confusing emotions themselves. We will try to produce the emotion in our consciousness and take a good look at it. Naming an emotion can sometimes help us find its cause.

It is also possible to “linguify” emotion, i.e. to find a syntactical way in which to place it in our sentences. The emotion can function as a part of speech, especially as a substantive or modifier. This sententializing of emotion allows us to use the search function of inner speech to figure out the meaning of the emotion. If this self talk is done loosely enough it can get close to

Freud's free association, hooking the power of this method to a different discipline than Freud used.

Emotional problems often lead us to other-talk as well as to self-talk. We can talk to friends, family, confidants, and the various kinds of counselors. The power of the other can sometimes evoke emotions from us that we are not able to produce in self talk. This interpersonal talk will be combined with self talk. Of course it is well known that men talk more to themselves, if to anyone, about their emotional problems and women talk more to others. There may also be systematic differences in the ways men and women engage in self talk, but at this point the literature seems to be silent on this issue.

My point in this aside about emotions, though, is to correct the perhaps over-analytical way I am looking at agency. The pragmatists emphasized the oversimplified problems of agency, such as fixing a car or curing an illness. But many problems of agency are emotional or semi-emotional, and they do not submit to analysis as easily as the more mechanical problems do. Still, to come back to my larger point, emotional problems respond, if anything, even more to inner speech than non-emotional problems do. So my argument for the connection between inner speech and agency seems well-founded.

A second argument for the agentic role of inner speech is that people who have little or no ability to engage in inner speech also seem to have little foresight into the consequences of their actions. In other words if inner speech is absent or impaired, people have a weakened power of agency. This applies to ADHD children (Barkley, 1997, pp. 278-282) as well as to most autistics (Whitehouse, 2006). Also people with brain injuries that hinder inner speech

seem to lack foresight. It is known through both physical and psychological tests that these latter groupings have little use of inner speech (Morin, 1993; Rohrer, et. al., 2008.) And it is also known that these people frequently engage in actions that cause them frustration and difficulties. Since we already know, via self awareness, that self talk is a directing part of the deliberation process, and we can see that the absence of inner speech weakens agency, it seems reasonable to conclude that inner speech at least partially controls agency.

The former argument then, from self observation, indicates that where there is inner speech their can be planning and foresight. The latter argument indicates that where inner speech is absent, foresight is weakened. Together they permit a fairly firm conclusion that inner speech is a necessary and more or less sufficient condition for intelligent agency.

2. The Stages of Agency and Inner Speech

I will now look at the structural features of agency, the stages or parts, and how inner speech operates in these parts. The argument in the preceding section concerned the overall cause or relation between inner speech and agency, but the argument of this section, the examination of the stages of action, will show the more specific causal processes or pathways.

Defining. To define an action is to tell oneself what it is, or more specifically what it means. This includes characterizing the nature of the action, but more importantly examining the consequences of the act for oneself. In other words we take a close look at an action and we run it through our system of beliefs,

values and desires. We inspect and we evaluate. We ask how the action articulates with ourselves. The whole time we are, so to speak, interrogating the option or “talking” the definition.

This talk may even construct the reality to some extent. In other words the action we are talking about may become what we are saying it is. W. I. Thomas said, in a much quoted line, “if people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Thomas and Thomas, 1928, p. 572. The book is by William and Dorothy, but Dorothy told me -- cite date of letter -- that the line in question was William’s, not hers). Thomas’s notion of definition may be an interpersonal process, based on what people say to each other, in which case it is “social construction.” But it can also be an individual process, based on what we say to ourselves, in which case it is “psychological construction.” Either way, Thomas’s definition suggests that this process can entail two distinct relations to reality. We can both describe what it is and construct what we say it is. The line between these two processes is blurry and we often cannot know which component is the stronger. I think, at least in the short run, describing is usually the stronger statement and constructing is usually a modest addition. But there are several contemporary positions that credit construction as the stronger component. And in the long run it is anybody’s guess the extent to which reality, particularly social reality, is constructed. In any case the Thomas theorem suggests that inner speech not only helps us define an action, it can also to some extent create the action.

Another way of looking at defining is to say that we are often searching for an act with a particular goal in view. We want a means to an end. We are bored and we want something to alleviate the boredom. We may consider having a

drink, calling a friend, listening to music, taking a walk or going to a movie. We list the possibilities to ourselves. And we may anticipate, mentally, the particular satisfaction each will give. This “tasting” of an act can sometimes tell us if it is the one we want, i.e. the one that will most effectively relieve our boredom. We try out each act in our imagination and visualize its effect on our mood. This visualization, which can involve emotions and imagery as well as speech, may help us make the decision and find the act we want. But the search light itself is inner speech and related modes of dialogue.

Choosing. The process of choosing is much disputed in social theory, since it brings up the matter of free will. This is an issue that gets a divided response, since, as Samuel Johnson said, all theory is against (it); all experience for it. This is an “essentially contested idea,” by which I mean an idea that has one valid form of evidence arguing for it and another valid form of evidence arguing against it (modifying Gallie, 1956 a bit).

In particular it seems to be a necessary condition for society that the institutions presume indeterminism or free will. In particular, rules pervade all societies and it is assumed that people have the capacity to obey or disobey the rules. If people were determined, or even thought to be determined, there would be no point in having rules. In democratic, industrial societies such specific rules as economic contract, law, and civil liberties also pervade the social fabric. So, one can think or theorize in a determined world, but it appears one cannot live a normal life except in a world that assumes free choice. And there is yet to appear a society that does not assume some freedom of choice.

It also seems unlikely that people would invest a lot of their inner resources thinking and planning to do things in a determined world if they then had to act in an indeterminate social world. Instead they “think free will,” even though this may be, in some technical ontological senses, a philosophical mistake. For, thinking in a determined world and then being unprepared to act in a seemingly undetermined social world would be a much bigger mistake.

The classical pragmatists themselves were of two minds about human freedom. On the one hand they recognized the affinity between society and freedom. On the other they saw that the epistemology of natural science requires a cause for every effect, a system of determinism and a complete absence of causal freedom. Peirce, James, Dewey and Mead all had commitments to free will but they also wobbled at times and tended toward the determinism of empirical science.

It is possible that there is an objective ontological split here, i.e. that there is both a deterministic physical world and an indeterministic social world. We live in both worlds, moving back and forth from moment to moment. We check the weather (determinism) and we decide to take a drive in the country (indeterminism). We start the car (determinism) and we decide which music disk to pop into the player (indeterminism). We feel hunger pangs in our stomach (determinism) and we start looking for lunch (indeterminism).

I will now set aside the choosing we do in the determined world, since we seem to merely rubber stamp what nature requires of us anyway. As we say, we have no choice. Fighting against the determined world, for example jumping off a high cliff in hopes of defying the law of gravity, is something sane human

beings rarely do. If we set aside the worlds of nature, then, this leaves the indeterministic world, the part that has an intrinsically human component.

Speaking of mental illness though, there seem to be two reasons people are committed to mental hospitals, i.e. declared to be mentally ill. If one treats the deterministic world as though it were one where free will prevailed, for example if one started jumping off cliffs, etc. one would be declared out of touch with reality and perhaps too dangerous to self and others to live in the ordinary world. On the other hand if you treated the social world as deterministic, by ignoring rules, refusing cooperation, obeying impulse and evading all issues of self control, this might also get you locked up. For again, you are not living in the real world. You are out of touch with reality.

The world of social institutions, then, is the one the Germans had in mind when they distinguished the human sciences from the physical sciences (Windelband, 1980). Max Weber called the former sciences the sphere of culture. And in contrast to the sphere of nature, he claimed that human beings “make” this world. By this he meant that the social institutions are products or artifacts of human beings, somewhat the way paintings, music and literature are the product of human beings. The institutions are less obviously so, since their origins are often buried in the past, and their authorship is much less that of single individuals than is the case with the fine arts. Still such social institutions as money, language and law are obviously not given to us in the natural world, They are not like the planets, oceans and continents. They are cultural forms and human products, however obscure their actual origins.

Decisions about the non-physical world, that is the human world, seem to have a voluntary or free component. But for any given act the volition or freedom may be extremely small. As Marx said, “human beings make their own history, but not under circumstances of their own choosing” (Marx, 1983, p 287.) He meant, given that history has its own structure and tendencies, humans cannot change it as they will. The free play or optional space may be very slight indeed. This is true of individuals in their lives too. Still, in principle there seems to be a modest amount of freedom in human affairs, sometimes more and sometimes less. The result, for present purposes, is that in the choosing moment of cultural actions, inner speech has a more important role than it does in actions confined to the deterministic, physical world. For there is more to talk to oneself about.

In physical actions we merely tell or remind ourselves how to cooperate with the laws of nature. “Put that there, hit that first, glue those two parts together,” etc. But in voluntary actions we can both describe and persuade. The rules of society come into play, but one’s own set of wants may also become engaged. Given the expanded options in a voluntary act, there are more “moving parts.” There is also the whole cajolatory or expressive vocabulary in play. “You can do it.” “Try harder.” “Make your (wife? father? kids? friends?) proud of you,” etc. In other words the inner speech for physical agency and cultural agency differ a lot. And most inner speech is for the voluntary side of life.

I would suggest that the dialogue in these cases is between our cognitive and volitional sides, our mind and our will. The mind says quite clearly that another drink at this cocktail party is a bad idea. It crosses the good health line

and it may hurt your night's sleep. The will, itself fanned by the emotions, says it will taste good, it will keep the buzz buzzing, and it will make you smarter. The will might convince the mind to alter the picture a bit, to make the drink look less menacing and more delicious. If this happens the will is winning the argument. If, instead, the mind remembers something that toughens its stand, say, that you are near the legal limit for driving, the mind might start getting more insistent and the will might get less pushy. The argument can go back and forth for a while, but at some point one of the voices wins.

I am suggesting that this kind of dialogue is behind all free choice issues. We are trying to decide which is the best course: engaging in the action under consideration or not. These two pictures will be present in our overall definition of the situation. One picture will look best at the point of decision as a greater good, a lesser evil or possibly as an irresistible pleasure. I think the cognition, i.e. what you picture and how you picture it, will usually determine the choice. We will choose what looks best, and looking best is the product of our own cognitive definition.

Of course we did not make this definition out of nothing. We chose it, and the will or choice process had a lot to do with what the cognitive power elected to see. So the will determines the intellect and the intellect in turn determines the will. Both are boss, but in a circular fashion.

Before leaving this section, let me ask how the self's argument over the next drink fits into the I-you-me scheme. The more cognitive, common sense spokesperson, which I called the mind or intellect, seems to be the "I." But this I is drawing, reflexively, on the me by invoking the driving laws and the science

of what alcohol does to the body. This bank of rules and information is stored in the generalized other and the memory, which is are aspects of the me. The eager-beaver, pushing for another drink, seems to be the “you.” For it is the you, i.e. the self just coming into the present, that will be the I that actually makes the decision.

Enacting. Once a choice has been made the carrying out of this choice is often simple and unproblematic. But circumstances can cause trouble. For example in the decision to commit suicide, to pick a somber example, there is usually a time lag between the time of decision and the time when one can carry out the decision. This time lag will probably include plenty of internal dialogue concerning the action. For one thing one might be thinking about the more specific planning details, such as how or where to perform the act. But one might also vacillate in the decision, particularly as the moment approaches (Firestone, 1986).

The enactment can also entail several new choices. If you decide to sell your house there will still be new decisions about which one to buy. If you divorce your spouse there will still be decisions about what to do next. And, more trivially, if you decide to have a party there are still decisions about the guest list, the refreshments, etc. All this shows that the enactment itself probably has stages of its own. Just as in the earlier stages of an act, this latter stage requires a lot of direction and the inner speech that guides that direction.

In law the enactment is more important than the decision. If you decide on, but do not act on, an illegal action, there is no crime. It runs the other way in

some religious moralities. If you decide on a wrongful act, sinning in your heart, you may be as guilty as if you had carried out the act.

4. Establishing Habits and Skills via Inner Speech

To discuss habits and skills it will be necessary to stretch the notion of inner speech to include inner experiences that are slight variations from speech itself. In outer speech there are variations in such forms as body language and mispronunciations. These spheres of signification are continuous with speech, and normally they can be interpreted as forms of speech, but they are still structurally a bit different from formal speech itself.

In the case of inner speech there are also a variety of peripheral forms. Imagery, i.e. sensory, kinesthetic and emotional, is an important area of inner experience. Yet images are not language as such, even though images can be incorporated into linguistic utterances. A special form of imagery is the mental practicing of some skill, say artistic or athletic, which I will discuss in more detail later. Daydreams too consist largely of imagery, although they can include dialogue and narrative. Night dreams are characterized largely by images, including emotional imagery, although these dreams can also have dialogue.

In near-sleep states, to continue the list of peripherals, humans can have inner speech, often with lots of uncontrolled imagery. These near-sleep experiences sometimes seem to be happening to someone else, even though they are present in our consciousness. The sensation of falling through space is common in the near-sleep state. A variant of near sleep experiences are hypnagogic images, which are unusually sharp in their sensory features and

which are often present in lucid dreams. Lucid dreams are dreams which we can control and which are known to be dreams, even as they are transpiring. Some people have lucid dreams and others do not. Another kind of peripheral is the uncontrolled fantasy, which, again, seems to be happening to someone else. In particular, paranoid fantasies, in which the person seems to be in some kind of danger, can take over consciousness as unwelcome guests. It can require considerable effort to dispel these daydreams from consciousness. Finally meditation, in which you concentrate, say, on your breathing and attain a state of deep relaxation, is related to inner speech. If you repeat a mantra or talk to your deity this experience is explicitly linguistic. In the case of inner silence, however, the near suppression of inner speech is what organizes the experience, and it is, in a way, a variant of inner speech.

These peripheral forms of inner speech can all be in the consciousness, and several of them, especially imagery, can be in your self talk. You can insert imagery in the sentences you use in your inner dialogue. Any non-linguistic image, e.g. visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory, kinesthetic or emotional can be inserted into some syntactical slot in an internal sentence. Notice you cannot do this in ordinary, person-to-person communication because the images are private to the speaker. You cannot send the odor of a cooking hamburger, linguistically, over to the person you are talking to, but you can shoot it from one part of your self to the other, i.e. from the I to the you. You and the other person do not share the hamburger image, but your I and your you do.

To take a comprehensive look at inner speech you have to take into account all of the peripheral forms, just as you have to do this for a comprehensive look

at outer speech. Some of these non-linguistic modalities can be incorporated into inner speech by inserting them into sentences. But much of the time these forms are simply on their own in our stream of consciousness. Inner speech does not only have such formal functions as thinking and self-regulation. There are also less controlled activities such as passive daydreaming, dialogues with visitors, entertainment, browsing, “just hanging out” in one’s mind and chit chatting with one’s self. The peripheral forms of inner speech, perhaps better designated simply as inner experiences, tend to prevail in the less formal activities of inner speech.

Returning now to habit, William James has an incisive discussion of habits, including the way we might use determination and sentiments to make or break a habit (James, 1890, pp. 122-123). But Peirce went him one better by suggesting that inner speech on its own can strengthen a habit, i.e. we can practice a habit mentally and covertly, getting some of the same strength we would get by practicing a habit physically and overtly. His example was how his younger brother Herbert, probably in his mid-teens, acted when their mother’s dress caught fire during a family dinner. Herbert immediately jumped up, grabbed a rug, wrapped it around his mother’s body, rubbed her carefully and extinguished the flames. Later the amazed Charles asked Herbert how he knew what to do “and he told me that since Mrs. Longfellow’s death, it was that he had often run over in imagination all the details of what ought to be done in such an emergency” (Peirce, 1934, p. 487, note 4; p 538, note 1).

Fannie Longfellow had died in a dress fire in 1861, when Herbert Peirce was about twelve. Her husband, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, wrapped a rug around her all right, but the rug was too small, and Fannie died from her burns

(Wagenknecht, 1956, p. 242; McFarland, 2004, pp. 243-244). Presumably Herbert asked himself what he would have done. He must have located the right size rug and ran it through his mind how to use it to extinguish a dress fire. He said he went through this mentally practicing routine “often.”

Peirce believed you could instill habits mentally, as his brother Herbert had done. Peirce was a century ahead of his time with this insight. But he gave no other instances of how to do this -- none from his own life, for example. Peirce seems to have thought inner speech was more important for self regulation than it was even for thinking (Colapietro's, 1989, pp. 99-118). And Peirce discussed self regulation brilliantly in an abstract, semiotic manner. But he did not do the obvious thing and give us extended examples. My guess is that he attempted to break bad habits and instill good ones in his personal life, but he was not as successful as he had hoped. Still, he is correct that working with habits is a major form of self regulation.

The idea of mentally practicing a habit was not picked up by the other pragmatists, even though Dewey wrote a whole book on habits (1930). Peirce's comments were in his personal notes, however, and his unpublished papers did not become available until 1956. Dewey was using the notion of habit as the unit of culture, thereby opposing the racist idea that the sub-cultures of ethnic groups were instinctive and biologically determined. Peirce had not been using the notion of habit as the unit of culture, although he could have, since his notion of semiotics was almost the same as Boas's anthropological concept of culture (Wiley, 2006c). Instead he was using it as a way of explaining how self control works.

Peirce's idea lie fallow for a long time, but eventually it was used to see whether artistic and sports skills could be practiced in the mind. Can you dance, play violin or paint better as a result of mental practicing? Or can you improve your swimming, diving, kicking a football or shooting a basketball. In recent years a large number of surveys and experiments have been done in a variety of sports fields, which show that imaginative practice can improve sports skills (Holmes and Calmels, 2008). Mental practice bumps into the issue of whether mental imagery is pictorial or, in a highly technical sense, verbal (Tye, 1991; Kosslyn, 1994). This issue is too complicated for this paper, so I will touch on mental practice only lightly.

Repeating an act, e.g. swimming, overtly in the swimming pool, normally strengthens a habit. But repeating it covertly, in the mind, can also strengthen a habit. I have called this inner activity "inner speech," since it can function as parts of sentences. But it is not just inner speech. It is also inner (or mental) swimming itself. And all forms of mental practice for any athletic or artistic skill are of the same nature. The mental use of injured muscles in the rehabilitation process, is still another form of mental practice (Holmes and Calmels, 2008). In all these cases inner speech does not just direct activity, it is the activity. To put it another way, what is going on here is not so much inner speech as inner agency.

Another way in which inner speech can be useful for directing habits is in the area of mental health. For several decades now cognitive therapy has used inner speech processes to intervene in mental health. This started with mood, especially depression, but now this therapy is used for psychopathologies of all

kinds. For my example I will single out Donald Meichenbaum's way of confronting phobias with inner speech (Meichenbaum. 1977, pp. 201-214). Meichenbaum does not explain the inner speech aspect of his therapy in sufficient detail, so I will discuss his approach at some length.

In an ordinary phobic situation, for example fear of heights, the person starts getting anxiety symptoms when he or she is in the frightening situation. These symptoms typically include shortness of breath, rapid heartbeat, sweating, muscular tension and the feeling that you are no longer in control of your body. There is also a typical inner speech pattern. The theme of this frightened speech is a frozen passivity, and it is characterized by terror, surrender, the feeling of being dominated and the relinquishing of one's will. Your inner speech might be something like "I can't," "this is too much," "others will see," or "get me out of here." Both the physical symptoms and the mode of inner speech will be inflexible, ritualized and in a clutching mode. The inner speech, in particular, will be simple, in a narrow range of meanings, and repetitive.

It might not be stretching it too much to say the power of inner speech is, for all practical purposes, non-existent in a terrified situation. People can lose their outer speech during intense fear, finding themselves reduced to a pathetic croaking sound. In nightmares too the power of speech can disappear, replaced by an animal grunting. So the status of inner speech in fear, even though it might seem to consist of a few words, can actually be paralyzed. When the voice freezes in terror, the job is to get started talking again. Any flowing inner speech at all is a victory in fear. But of course the cognitive therapists want their clients to say particular things to themselves.

Meichenbaum thinks your inner dialogue is the crucial causal strand in these phobic situations. He encourages his clients to try to talk to themselves in some way that does not fit the terror. Instead of voicing despair he asks them to say something that distances themselves from the physical symptoms. Unfortunately he does not give concrete examples. But it is clear that he wants some kind of self labelling that is incompatible with the fear reaction.

Staying with fear of heights, I will give a hypothetical example of what Meichenbaum seems to be getting at. If you have this fear, and you are, for example, driving over a high bridge, you may well find yourself with some of the fear symptoms described above. If the symptoms are severe, you are an unsafe driver, and you have to get across -- or be driven across -- one way or the other. But if the symptoms are not too severe, there are options for changing your inner speech.

Presumably you are saying things to your self about the frightening situation, i.e. the bridge, and also about your reaction to the bridge. What you are now saying about the bridge is that it has overwhelming power over you and that you are unable to traverse the height in a normal, calm way. You are seeing and addressing the bridge as a unitary, undivided danger. What you need to do, Meichenbaum seems to be saying, is to start looking at features of the bridge other than its danger. This will not be easy, because fearful inner speech is tightly boundaried. It will be difficult to say anything that is not functionally related to the terror. But if the person, possibly with the help of a therapist, can use self talk that breaks out of the terrified mode, the cure can begin.

The frightened driver might take a second look at that bridge. Bridges are high so that ships can cross under them. But they do not have to be, and usually are not, uniformly high in their whole span. They can be low and then high, or they can have a low middle with higher beginnings and endings. In other words they can vary in how frightening they are. Since the driver is locked into a fear pattern, he or she may not notice that the fear stimulus is greater at some points than at others. The driver will be clutched into an unvarying fear pattern and inner speech response from beginning to end. But if the driver can say, "this middle part is not quite as scary as the beginning and end," this is a clue for varying the inner speech pattern. The middle part can be gradually transformed into a "time out."

What Meichenbaum wants is for the client to alter the inner speech pattern so that it begins to be incompatible with extreme, uniform fear. If the fear can go up, down, and then up again, along with the rise and fall of the bridge, the driver may be able to begin altering his or her internal dialogue. If one can say, "now I'm extremely frightened," and then "now I'm a bit less frightened" and then "now I'm very frightened again," the client will have adopted an inner speech pattern that is beginning to be incompatible with a uniformly terrified response.

If the therapy process goes as it is supposed to, the terror should be getting a bit less intense. The fear response should be moving to a less extreme level. And the symptoms themselves should be starting to change from dangerous to neutral -- and eventually even to a positive, energizing state. Dividing up the stimulus, the bridge, into parts of differing danger is the beginning of constructing an inner speech pattern that is less overcome with fright. If you

can say to yourself “this part is less frightening” you have cracked open the ritualized clench of fear.

Another way one might find what Meichenbaum is advocating, is to divide the span itself into “going up,” “at the top,” and “going down” stages. If you can divide the stimulus into these three zones, you might be able to alter the nature of the fear reaction at each of the three moments. For example, you might say, “going down is easier than going up ... the height keeps decreasing and my fear can decrease with it.” Or maybe going up can be defined as less frightening than being at the top. The point is that dividing the span up in this way can again give you some cognitive flexibility along with some control over the stimulus.

What Meichenbaum seems to be getting at is having the client create some “cognitive dissonance,” in the situation. This dissonance can serve as a lever for getting some purchase on one’s inner speech, And as a result of that, on the symptoms themselves. Meichenbaum’s method -- learning to modify a frightened inner speech repertoire and thereby creating a cognitive structure incompatible with the phobic pattern -- can be used for other psychopathologies. All of the phobias and compulsions might respond to this approach. An incessant hand washer can distinguish the wetting down, soaping up, rubbing around, watering down, etc, for example. And mood disorders such as depression have also been treated with inner speech modification. In all cases the therapist and the patient construct some kind of cognitive dissonance that raises the psychic costs of maintaining the symptom.

Throughout this chapter I have been showing how the self uses inner speech to direct its action or agency. A procedure that underlies this process is the way the self uses inner speech to build up its own internal solidarity and empower itself for getting things done. This care of the self has the same effect as eating spinach had for Popeye, the American comic book character. Spinach was the magic food that made Popeye strong. In a similar way the ritualization of the self can make one strong.

In the classical social theory of Durkheim and Weber the person or self is regarded as the most sacred of entities, more so than even the cherished symbols of nations and religions. The sacredness of the self is especially characteristic of contemporary industrial societies. There may be disagreement on values from one religion or sub-culture to the next, but the one thing on which people are most likely to agree on is the rights and inviolability of the individual. Industrial societies, particularly the democratic variety, are now united by the rule of law, more so than by tradition or religion. And at the center of contemporary law are the rights of the individual.

This modern individualism is obviously important for human agency, for it gives the person dignity and social importance. If these resources are carefully husbanded they also give the person self confidence, energy and a feeling of inner worth. The power of the contemporary individual clearly comes from the social institutions, to a great extent. It is a result of the looking glass self, broadly speaking (Wiley, forthcoming). But this power also comes from within, as a result of how we look at and talk to ourselves. Humans are powerful because of things they do to and say about themselves in the theaters of their

consciousness. It is largely inner speech that constructs the sacredness of the individual.

This process can be explained with the ideas of the French social theorist, Emile Durkheim. To use Durkheim to explain the sacred self, you have to begin with the sacredness of society, working your way step-wise down to the self. One of the most powerful ideas of Durkheim is that societies are held together by solidarity, and that this solidarity is engendered by social rituals. Durkheim's deepest description of this process is in his book on primitive religion (1912). Among the Australian aborigines the clan had to disperse for most of the year to engage in the hunting that supplied its food. But in the fertile wet season, which extended from December to March, the clan would get together for about four weeks to celebrate its communalism. Central to its solidarity rituals was its totem, the animal or plant that symbolized the clan. This totem was profoundly sacred for the clan.

Interestingly however, what was considered most sacred was not the totem itself, say a kangaroo or a lizard. More sacred were the drawings of the totem, delivered in abstract form on pieces of wood or stone. These were mounted on poles and raised in the reverential way in which religions raise their sacred symbols. The totem symbolized the unity or solidarity of the clan, and in Durkheim's eyes, this solidarity gave the power to the clan's mana or meaning system, to its ideas, beliefs, values and language.

The reason the drawings were more sacred than the totems themselves, however, was not broached by Durkheim. He merely reports it as a "remarkable result." (Durkheim, 1995, p 133). As he puts it, "the images of the totemic

being are more sacred than the totemic being itself” (in italics), and “the representations of the totem are more efficacious than the totem itself” (Durkheim, 1995, p 133).

Durkheim’s puzzle can be interpreted in the following way. It would appear that what was sacred for the aborigines was not the animal or plant life forms, but rather the power of symbolism itself, which was represented by the drawings. In other words I think the drawings were symbols of symbols. They represented the human mind and its capacity to use symbolism (see Peirce’s dictum that “humans are signs.” 5:313-314). In this sense what the Australian aborigines were worshiping was not the life forms that constituted the totems. What they were worshipping was the semiotic, symbolic and linguistic powers that had evolved in the human species. They were indirectly worshipping themselves.

Durkheim’s explanation of how ritual works is also interesting. In the case of the Australians, the clan’s rituals consisted of three actions. First the clan assembled in one place. This was easy, for they had already assembled for their annual communal period. In the case of ordinary social rituals in contemporary societies, the process of assembling can be labor intensive, difficult and expensive. Still it is the first condition of a successful ritual.

Secondly the clan had to adopt a ritual mode, in the social psychological sense. This means they all had to focus their attention on the same thing, in this case the totemic symbols. The number of people in these annual assemblies varied between about twenty and thirty. They also had to adopt a ritual state of mind, meaning they had to stop thinking of and attending to

ordinary affairs and concentrate on the ritual itself. And, in modern terms, they had to engage in the “willing suspension of disbelief” in the power of the ritual -- which is what we do when we go to a movie or a play. The purpose of the ritual was to strengthen the clan, and the clan had to believe this for it to come about.

The third feature of a social ritual is the presentation of the key symbols and meanings. For these clans, the key symbol was the drawing of the totem, the chanting in front of the symbol and the dancing that drew the clan into the symbol. These were the core sacred rites, And Durkheim thought the symbols were “performatives,” in the linguistic sense (Austin, 1962). This means they made a thing true by saying it was. If a person performs a promise there is a promise. If a person names a ship or baptizes a child, this ship has a name and this child is baptized. In the same way if the clan used its rituals to enunciate it’s values and beliefs, these values and beliefs were made to be true. The commitment of the clan to these symbols was deepened. Ritual for Durkheim is a reality construction process

This Durkheimian tripartite scheme can be applied to any social ritual, ranging all the way from large religious or civic rituals down to family birthdays and thanksgivings. The three-element scheme works rather well for any ritual. Randall Collins has even argued , drawing on Erving Goffman, that face to face interaction has similar rituals (Goffman, 1967; Collins, 1982, pp. 130-132). Collins applies this scheme to the intimate relationship between two people in love. The close actions and gestures of these two people, including physical love-making, symbolize their love, much as Durkheim’s clan’s rituals symbolize their solidarity.

Returning to agency, now, with Durkheim hand, it seems clear that the self too is a kind of community which engages in internal rituals. Further, these rituals can supply the solidarity that gives meaning and worth to the self. When we ritualize our selves we engage in a form of self worship. And what we are worshipping, just as in Durkheim's clan, is our semiotic powers. We worship our ability to worship, i.e. our capacity to signify and represent.

How does this come about? People do not usually engage in explicit and formal self-worshipping or self-aggrandizing rituals. Instead these actions are done informally and often only half consciously. They are done when the self needs power, e.g. when we are in a weakened state, when we are called upon to perform well, when we are in a stage of transition, when we are trying something new, when we are in grave danger and when we have a chance to improve ourselves substantially. When the self is being called upon to "step up to the plate" and be its best, we want to build up the solidarity of the self.

When I need to be my best I give myself a slow, lingering smile. The philosopher, Jerry Fodor speaks of saying "you can do it Jerry" to himself. Athletes and other performers engage in encouraging self talk as they approach a competitive moment. And many people have lucky charms, montras, pet names for themselves and other ways of inducing a fervor. When we engage in these personal rituals we assemble the parts of the self, even if quite momentarily. We enter a ritual, psychological mode, preparing to energize the self. And then we state the magic words, the "you can do it" injunction, and get ready to act our best.

In terms of this paper, we assemble the parts of the self: the I-you-me reflexivity, earlier stages of the self, the key “visitors” such as friends, family and perhaps deity, and all the things, symbols and people we identify with. Our life passes over our eyes in a moment. We increase the mana or solidarity or power of the self by engaging in inner ritual and inner reality construction. The power of agency is to a great extent fueled by the religious care of the self.

Conclusion

This has been an exploration of how inner speech intersects with agency. Inner speech is a fairly well defined idea, but agency is much more open ended. For this reason I had to pick and choose which of the many aspects of agency I would consider. Agency is a sea of meaning because self is also a sea of meaning. Self is one of our more or less limitless concepts, along with such notions as reality, meaning, truth, value and so on. We sample from these big ideas, and everyone’s sample is a bit different.

A theme I tried to hit was that the self is an autonomous, sui generis entity. Whatever the self’s ontology might be, its activity is largely controlled by its dialogical function. To quote Bakhtin, the self not only engages in dialogue, it is dialogue. Or as Peirce liked to say, the self is a sign.

But it is not an ordinary sign. For example, Robert Perinbanayagam characterizes the self as an maxisign (1991, pp. 9-11), meaning that it is an amalgam of all the varieties of signs. I like to think of the self as a generic sign. In Peirce’s terms, the “I” is the representamen, the “me” is the object and the “you” is the interpretant. When the I, you and me are in dialogue, they are also

in the process of signification or sign-making. The self is a generic sign open to all species or varieties of signs. It is a significative network whose function is to carry dialogical communication.

Inner speech is the key self process. Dialogue steers the self, acting as our compass through life. My diagram of the self was meant to show, in some detail, how dialogue controls the self. For John Maynard Keynes, finance was the magneto of capitalism, and when the magneto went on the blink, the whole system fell with it. Dialogue is the magneto of the self, the controlling process. The things being controlled are the structure and agency of the self, using these terms more or less as they were used in the debate between Anthony Giddens and Margaret Archer.

In the self the social structure is located primarily in the generalized other. Mead's term suggests that we encounter the social structure as part of the internal dialogue. This is why he gave it the personal name of "other" rather than an impersonal name such as structure. For Mead the I-me dialogue was largely between the I and the generalized other, i.e. the internalized social structure conceived as a conversational other.

When you add Peirce to Mead the main strand of the internal conversation is between the I and the you, although there is a simultaneous and indirect conversation between the I and the me. As I said earlier, Mead's conversation is now encompassed in a larger, more comprehensive conversation. And Peirce's conversation is similarly part of a larger conversation.

When we act we draw on all our resources, including both agency (our ability to design and complete an act) and structure (our access to the social rules and resources). Along with the generalized other, we also draw on the habits and memory. When, in the early part of this paper, I described the complex connections between the me and the you, I was talking about the connections between structure and agency.

The interaction of structure and agency seems wide open and undetermined from either direction. We choose how dependent we will be on the structure just as we choose how innovative we will be in action. Just how this balance works out will depend on the circumstances, the internal conversation, and the (slightly, in my opinion) free will of the agent.

The self is the crossroads of several ontological levels -- culture, structure, person, physical body, etc. A variety of influences come together and influence the life of the self. But it is the dialogical process itself that produces these outcomes.

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